Reduction of trade barriers

2285. SHRI MAM. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and the United States of America propose to reduce trade barriers to bilateral high technology trade while enhancing security of such trade; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) India and US have High Technology Cooperation Group (HTCG), which is unique to both nations. The Group, chaired by the Foreign Secretary and U.S. Under Secretary for Commerce, seeks to identify steps to create a favourable environment for high-technology trade and collaboration, while enhancing the security related to such trade. It focuses on high-tech areas including Information Technology, Defence Technology, Nano-technology, Life Sciences and Bio-technology.

(b) Since the establishment of the HTCG, high-technology trade between US and India, including licensed trade in dual-use items, has grown substantially. The U.S. dual use licenses for India had climed from 423 in FY 2002 to 619 in FY 2003 and 912 in FY 2004. In value terms too, this trade has gone up from $ 26.78 million in FY 2002 to $ 90.06 million in 2004. The license approval rate has increased from 84 per cent to 90 per cent in a two-year time period.

Indo-Pak agreement regarding repatriation of fishermen

2286. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has signed any agreement with Pakistan regarding repatriation of Indian fishermen; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) During the Foreign Secretary level talks held in New Delhi on June 27-28,2004 it was agreed to release all the apprehended fishermen in each other's custody and to put in place